

Remarks in Dayton, Ohio

October 28, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for coming out today. You're lifting my spirits. I'm honored you're here. I have come back to the great city of Dayton, Ohio, to ask for your vote and ask for your help. We have a duty in our country to vote. I'm asking for you to remind your friends and neighbors of that duty. We have an obligation in a free society to show up to the polls.

I've come to Dayton to ask you to get our fellow Republicans to vote, to find independents to go to the polls, and don't overlook discerning Democrats like Mayor McKelvey from the great city of Youngstown, Ohio. And when you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America for all of us, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

My regret is that Laura is not with me today.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. It's obviously your regret as well. *[Laughter]* So we were in the seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. And then we became re-acquainted when she was a public school librarian. And I asked her to marry me, and she said, "Fine, but make me a promise." I said, "Okay, what is it?" She said, "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." *[Laughter]* I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she is not holding me to that promise. She is giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, a warm, a compassionate First Lady. I love her dearly. And, as a matter of fact, just as we pulled into the parking lot I got a phone call from three other members of my family. Barbara and Jenna, our twins, are out campaigning, and guess who they're with? They're with old Number 41. That would be former President Bush. And they send their best to the good people of Dayton, Ohio.

And they send their best to my buddy, the Senator from Ohio, George Voinovich. I tell you, you're lucky to have a man of this caliber serving you in the United States Senate.

What a fine American, and I hope you put him back in office with a resounding vote. Plus he married well.

I want to thank my friend George McKelvey, the—from Youngstown, Ohio. We had a rally there yesterday. A lot of people showed up to see the Mayor. *[Laughter]* They wanted to see their leader. I'm proud that George has stood up by me—by side—side by side with me. There's a lot of Democrats that are for my candidacy. There's a lot of people around this country who know that the Democrat Party has left them. And I welcome every Democrat's support. You are welcome on our team.

I want to thank the other United States Senator from Ohio for joining us today. Mike DeWine and his wife, Fran, are with us. Thanks, Mike, for coming. I know you're proud of Congressman Mike Turner. Mike, you're doing a great job. And my friend John Boehner is with us, Congressman John Boehner—and his wife, Debbie—the author of the No Child Left Behind Act in the House of Representatives.

I want to thank Chief Justice Tom Moyer for joining us today. Mr. Judge, thanks for being here. I want to thank your mayor, the mayor of Trotwood, Ohio, for joining us today. Thanks for coming, Don. I'm proud you're here. I want to thank all the local and State officials, all the candidates.

But most of all, I want to thank you all. I want to thank the grassroots activists, the people putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls, the people doing all the hard work. I want to thank you for what you have done, and I want to thank you for what you're going to do. With your help, with your hard work in turning out that vote, there is no doubt in my mind we'll carry Ohio again and win a great victory on November the 2d.

Five days from today, the people of America will go to the polls. We're choosing the leader of our country at a time of great consequence in our world. We're at war against a terrorist enemy unlike any we have seen. We have much more to do to win a decisive victory in the war on terror. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in these troubled

times, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

Our economy is in the midst of change and challenge. It can be a time of great opportunity if we have the right policies to strengthen rather than stall our economic recovery. We have much more to do to improve our children's education, to make health care more accessible and affordable, to strengthen our Social Security for our children and our grandchildren. And I'm ready for the job.

My 4 years as your President have confirmed some lessons and have taught some new ones. A President must have a vision in order to lead this country. You cannot lead if you don't know where you're going. A President must set clear goals and bring people together to achieve those goals. A President must surround himself with smart and capable people who are willing to express their opinion. I have surrounded myself with smart and capable people.

A President must make America's priorities crystal-clear, especially in an uncertain world. I've learned to expect the unexpected, because history can deliver sudden horror from a soft autumn sky. I have found you better know what you believe or risk being tossed to-and-fro by the flattery of friends or the chorus of critics. I've been grateful for the lessons I've learned from my parents: Respect every person; do your best; live every day to its fullest. And I've been strengthened by my faith and humbled by its reminder that my life is part of a much bigger story.

I have learned firsthand how hard it is to send young men and women into battle, even when the cause is right. I've been reminded that the world looks to America for leadership and that it is crucial for the American President to be consistent. I have learned America's President must base decisions on principle, core convictions from which you will never waver. The issues vary; the challenges are different every day in this job. Tactics and strategy must be flexible, but a President's convictions must be steady and true. As Presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan so clearly demonstrated, a President cannot blow in the wind. A President has to make the tough decisions and stand by them.

The President must not follow the path of the latest polls. The President must lead based on conviction and conscience. Especially at a time of war, mixed signals only confuse our friends, embolden our enemies. Mixed signals are the wrong signals for an American President to send.

When America chooses a President, you choose not just a set of positions on issues of philosophy or record; you choose a human being who comes with strengths and weaknesses. One of the things I've learned about the Presidency is, whatever your strengths are, you're going to need them, and whatever your shortcomings are, people are going to notice them. *[Laughter]* Sometimes I'm a little too blunt. I get that from my mother. Sometimes I mangle the English language. *[Laughter]* I get that from my dad. But Americans have learned this, that even when you disagree with me, at least you know what I believe and where I stand. And you cannot say that about my opponent.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Senator Kerry has taken a lot of different positions, but he rarely takes a stand. He has run a campaign of contradictions. I think it's fair to say that consistency has not been the Senator's long suit. *[Laughter]* He was for the PATRIOT Act and the No Child Left Behind Act—until he was against key provisions of both of them. He voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq, then said I was wrong to use that force. When I sent troops into Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power, he said it was the right decision. Now he says it was the "wrong war."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. During one of our debates, he said Saddam Hussein was a threat. Then a couple of answers later, he said there was no threat in Iraq. Just last year, American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq needed \$87 billion to help them complete their missions. This was vital support. First, Senator Kerry said, "It would be irresponsible to vote against the troops." He said that on national TV. Then he did that irresponsible thing and he voted against the funding for our troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign. When they asked him about his vote, he said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." He's given several explanations of that vote since then, but perhaps one of the most interesting is, he said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

I will always stand with our troops. I want to thank the military families who have joined us today. And I want to thank the veterans who have set such a great example to those who wear the uniform.

Now, you have to wonder why the Senator has taken such different positions at different places and different times in this campaign. Well, let me give you two reasons. It's important for the people of Ohio to understand this. Senator Kerry changes positions because he's willing to say anything he thinks that will help him politically at the time. And he does so to try to obscure a 20-year trail of out-of-the-mainstream votes that leads to an inescapable conclusion: Senator Kerry has been on the wrong side of the defining national security and domestic policy debates of the last 2 years. He can run, but he cannot hide.

Several times during the course of the campaign, the Senator has changed his positions for political convenience. The Senator recognized Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized force to remove him, until his Democratic opponent, Howard Dean, began gaining ground as an antiwar candidate. The Senator decided he had to appeal to that wing of his party, so he voted against the troops—after voting to put them in risk in the first place.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The Senator was all for removing Saddam Hussein when we went into Baghdad, and he was very supportive when we captured him. After all, the polls showed that he was—that that was very popular at the time. People liked that. When the going got tough and when we faced determined opposition and things weren't quite so popular, the Senator suddenly wasn't quite so supportive. In fact, he changed his mind

entirely, saying that Iraq was the "wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. What does that lack of conviction say to our troops who are risking their lives in this vital cause? Think about what that says to our allies who have joined our cause. Think about what that says, that lack of conviction, say to our enemies, that if you make things uncomfortable, if you stir up trouble, John Kerry will back off. And that's a very dangerous signal in the world in which we live.

Just this week Senator Kerry showed his willingness to put politics ahead of facts and the truth. He criticized our military's handling of explosives in Iraq, when his own advisers admitted he didn't know what had happened. His spokesman has now had to acknowledge that the explosives may have been moved before our troops arrived. A President needs to get all the facts before jumping to politically motivated conclusions. The Senator's willingness to trade principle for political convenience makes it clear that John Kerry is the wrong man for the wrong job at the wrong time.

There's another reason the Senator changes positions. He doesn't want you to know where he stands. He has a history. He doesn't want you to know where he really stands on national security because he has a record of weakness. When Ronald Reagan was confronting the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, Senator Kerry proposed cancellation of critical defense weapons systems and said that President Reagan's policy of peace through strength was making America less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Ronald Reagan was right.

When former President Bush led a coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991, Senator Kerry voted against using force to liberate Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and former President Bush was right.

In 1994, just one year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, Senator

Kerry proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence budget, cuts so extreme that even his Massachusetts colleague, Ted Kennedy, opposed them. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—we've got to be fair—Senator Kennedy was right.

When you are one Senator among 100, you can be wrong without consequence. But the President's opinion decides the security and the fate of the American people.

We have a different point of view when it comes to your security. Senator Kerry says September the 11th did not change him much. That's what he said.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And his policies make that clear. The Senator says the war on terror is primarily a law enforcement and intelligence-gathering operation.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. September the 11th changed me a lot. In the days after the attacks, I went to Ground Zero. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood where those buildings used to stand. I'll never forget that day, workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember the man—I remember one person in particular, who grabbed me by the arm. His eyes were bloodshot, and he looked me square in the eye and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I've gotten up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

There are other things about my opponent's positions he doesn't want you to know. I don't know if you remember the debate—one of the debates, they were talking about health care. And he looked square in the camera and he said, "My plan—the Government doesn't have anything to do with it." [Laughter] I could barely contain myself. [Laughter]

The Government has got a lot to do with it. Eighty percent of the people in his plan end up on a Government plan. You see, if you make it easier for people to get on Medicaid, small businesses will drop coverage for their employees because the Government will provide the insurance. That's moving people from the private sector to the public sector. When the Government starts writing

the checks, the Government starts making the rules. And when it comes to your health care, when the Government starts making the rules, the Government starts making your decisions, and they start deciding for the docs. Federal control of health care is the wrong prescription for American families.

I've got a better idea. We'll make sure health care is available and affordable. We'd take care of the poor and the indigent by expanding community health centers across this country. We'll help make sure low-income children are signed up for the health programs available for them. We're also going to help our families. We'll expand health savings accounts so small businesses and families can better afford insurance and manage their own account. We will allow small businesses to come together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do.

And to make sure health care is available and affordable, we're going to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. I have met too many doctors, here in Ohio and elsewhere, too many ob-gyns that are getting run out of practice because these lawsuits are causing their premiums to go up. And that hurts the people of Ohio when that happens. I have met too many expectant moms who are worried about the quality of the health care for their baby. See, these lawsuits are making it hard for you to afford health care. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-personal-injury-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the patients of Ohio. I'm standing with the doctors of Ohio. I am for medical liability reform—now.

The Senator really doesn't want you to know where he stands on taxes, because he's going to raise them. Listen, to be fair, raising taxes is one of the few things that he has been consistent about. You might say he's made a habit of it. He's been in the Senate for 20 years. He's voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That is five times for every year he's been in the Senate. I would call that a predictable pattern, a leading indicator. [*Laughter*] During the campaign, he's promised a lot of new spending, \$2.2 trillion of new spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. They asked him how he's going to pay for it, and he said, "That's simple. We'll just tax the rich." Most small businesses in Ohio pay tax at the individual income tax. One of the reasons why people are finding work here is because the small-business sector of your economy is strong and getting stronger. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And by raising the top two brackets, my opponent would be taxing the job creators of Ohio, and that's bad economic policy.

The other thing is, is that by raising the top brackets, you only raise between 600 and 800 billion. That is far short of 2.2 trillion. I would call that a tax gap. That would be the difference between what he has promised to spend and what he can deliver. Guess who usually gets to fill the tax gap? You do. But the good news is, we're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Ohio and win nationally on November the 2d.

You know where I stand when it comes to taxes. When I campaigned for the Presidency in 2000, I said we're going to provide our families tax relief. I kept my word. We increased the child tax credit to help our families. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code should encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We provided help for our small businesses.

This economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. We're growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The number of jobs have been increased by 1.9 million since August of 2003. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. Let me put that in perspective for you: That's lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Ohio's farmers are making a living. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in the State of Ohio. Homeownership rate is at an alltime high. More minority families own a home today than ever before in our Nation's history.

I understand times are tough here in Ohio in certain parts of your State. I know that. That's why I've been coming to your State, listening to people, talking about how to make sure this economy continues to grow. The unemployment rate went from 6.3 percent to 6 percent last month. Ohio added 5,500 new jobs last month. We're on our way to recovery. And the question the Ohio people have got to answer: Who's got the plan to make sure this economy continues to grow? I do: Low taxes; less regulation; and tort reform.

When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations in our public schools. And I kept my word. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act. We are spending more money for Title I students, trying to help low-income students. But now we're asking the question, "Can you read and write and add and subtract?" See, in return for excess money, we want to know whether or not people are learning. We believe every child can learn. We believe everybody has got potential, and we expect every child to learn in America.

You cannot solve a problem until you diagnose the problem. And now we're diagnosing, and we're beginning to solve them. Math and reading scores are going up. The achievement gap amongst minority students is closing in America. And we're not going to go back to the old days of low expectations and mediocrity in our schoolhouses.

When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to improve Medicare by adding prescription drug coverage for our seniors. I kept my word. You might remember the old debates of Medicare. They called it "Mediscare." [*Laughter*] People weren't willing to really take on the issue. I took on the issue. I was joined by Senator Voinovich and Senator DeWine, Congressman Boehner, Congressman Turner. We go to Washington to do things for the people. Medicare needed to be strengthened. Medicare needed to be modernized. You see, Medicare would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That wasn't fair to

our seniors. We got the job done, and beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage in Medicare.

My opponent voted against the Medicare bill.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. In a new term, I will defend the reforms we have put in place and keep our promise to our America's seniors.

And speaking about our seniors, let me talk about Social Security, now that you got me on a roll. [Laughter] When you're out gathering up the vote, remind your friends and neighbors that in the 2000 campaign, it was said that if George W. got elected, the seniors would not get their checks. I don't know if you remember that. It may be happening here in Ohio now. You remind them that George W. did get elected, and our seniors got their checks. And our seniors will continue to get their checks. And baby boomers like me, we'll probably get our checks.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether or not Social Security will be there for them when they retire. I believe younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, an account they call their own, an account the Government cannot take away.

The job of a President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. My opponent said he's going to protect Social Security, but remind your friends and neighbors, he voted eight times to tax Social Security benefits.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And he's offered nothing for the younger generation. In a new term, I'll bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen Social Security for generations to come.

Let me tell you what else we're going to do in a new term. We're going to simplify the Tax Code. It is a complicated mess. It's a million pages thick. We're going to make it fair for our workers, fair for our business, and fair for America.

Now, there's more to do. I'm asking for your vote because I know where I want to lead this country. I see a more hopeful America. I want to work with you to make sure

our education system fulfills its promise and to make sure health care is available and affordable without the Federal Government taking it over. I want to make sure we do our duty to younger generations of Americans, and I want to continue to work to spread freedom and liberty so the world is more peaceful.

I want you to understand what has taken place in a brief period of time, particularly the youngsters who are here. The Taliban ran Afghanistan, and young girls could not go to school because they had a dark vision of the world. And if their mothers did not toe their ideological line of hatred, they would be pulled in the public square and whipped and sometimes killed in a sports stadium. These people were barbaric people. Because we acted to defend ourselves, because we upheld doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," because we acted in our self-interest to defend ourselves and eradicated those Al Qaida training camps that were in Afghanistan, millions of people were able to go to the polls and vote for a President of Afghanistan. And the first voter was a 19-year-old woman. Think about that.

There will be elections in Iraq. Think how far Iraq has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. Freedom is on the march, and we're better off for it. We believe that people want to be free. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Over the next 4 years, we've got work to do to make sure our families are secure and prosperous and our children are educated. And we've also got work to do to defend the values that are important for our country. I believe marriage is a sacred commitment. I believe marriage and family are the foundations of our society. I believe in a culture of life in America. I proudly signed the ban on partial-birth abortion. I will name judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent has a different view. He voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, and he voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The way I heard it, he says he's going to have a litmus test for his judges. He also went on to say that, one time in this campaign, that the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The heart and soul of America is found in caring communities like Dayton, Ohio.

I'm optimistic about the future of this country. I know we can overcome any problem that faces us, because I know the American people. I know the strength and courage and compassion of the people who live in this land.

You know, one of my favorite quotes is written by a fellow Texan named Tom Lea. He said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." You know, in the course of this campaign, my opponent has been talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that is coming.

And I see a great day coming for America. I see a hopeful day. And I see the fact that the hard work we've done is paying off. I see peace coming as well, peace for our children and our grandchildren.

You know, when I campaigned across your State, I made this pledge, that if I won in 2000, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. at the Hara Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor George M. McKelvey of Youngstown, OH; Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer of the Supreme Court of Ohio; Mayor Donald K. McLaurin of Trotwood, OH; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in Westlake, Ohio

October 28, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here today. I am so

honored so many came out to say hello. You've lifted my spirits. I am here in Westlake, Ohio, asking for your vote and your help. I am asking you during the next couple of days to get on the telephone, to tell your friends and neighbors we have a duty in our free society to vote. We have an obligation to vote. Tell them they need to go to the polls, and when you get them headed to the polls, tell them that if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I am so honored you are here. My only regret on this beautiful day is that Laura is not here to see the size of this crowd.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. I know it. That is generally the reaction. [Laughter] "Why didn't you stay at home and send her?" [Laughter] I don't know if you know this or not, but Laura and I went to the seventh grade together, San Jacinto Junior High. By the way, she went to the same high school at the same time that Tommy Franks did, in Midland, Texas. He's older, and she's prettier. [Laughter] And so, I met her again—we became re-acquainted—and she was a public school librarian when I did so. And she said—I said, "Will you marry me?" She said, "Fine, but make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Promise me I will never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "You got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches—she's speaking in Florida today—and when she does, the American people see a strong, compassionate, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I readily concede he does not have the waviest hair in the race. [Laughter] You'll be happy to hear I did not pick him because of his hairdo. [Laughter] I picked him because of his judgment. I picked him because of his experience, and he is getting the job done for the American people.

I'm proud and I am honored to be supported by General Tommy Franks. America is safer and the world is better off because of the leadership of this fine American. God bless you, Tommy. And I'm proud to be here with Senator Bob Dole and all the retired officers who are on this stage who represent